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# KATHLEEN VINEHOUT

## STATE SENATOR

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**Testimony in Support of AB 236  
Senate Committee on Education  
Thursday, December 3, 2009**

Good morning Chairman Lehman and members of the committee. Thank you for hearing AB 236 which allows certain agriculture courses to be counted as science credit. Thank you also to Rep. Radcliffe and his staff for work on this important bill.

The agriculture education community has been hard at work to ensure we properly educate interested young people to enter the diverse and evolving field of agriculture. Last session I authored a bill with Rep. Al Ott to create the Agricultural Education and Workforce Development Council to attract, develop and retain the workforce required to grow Wisconsin's \$59 billion agriculture and food industry.

AB 236 continues this work by allowing a science intensive agriculture class to count as a third science credit. Currently, the state requires two high school science credits for graduation. AB 236 does not change this requirement. It simply allows an agriculture class that meets DPI equivalence requirements to be counted as a third science credit.

The broad field of agriculture now requires a highly trained and educated workforce which necessitates a specialized, science intensive education. Agriculture classes now reflect this reality. For example food science, horticulture, and animal science classes contain rigorous chemistry, botany and biology science components.

Agriculture career clusters and pathways have been developed to help guide students in their education. None would argue students should not take at least two general science credit. However, AB 236 will allow students greater flexibility in following a career pathway to obtain a specialized agriculture education.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill. It is my hope that we can pass AB 236 so that we can provide greater flexibility and options for those interested in pursuing a career in Wisconsin agriculture.

Good Morning and thank you Senators for allowing me to be hear to day to talk on be half of my boss Rep. Mark Radcliffe.

AB 236 is a bill that address the diversity that agriculture is experiencing and tries to get more students interested and involved in the agriculture industry

The field of agri-science has continued to grow and expand, and today many agricultural educators are meeting the needs of the industry by adopting rigorous science curriculum into their agriculture courses; broadening their fields of study to: Food Science, Horticulture, Floriculture, Animal Science and Ag Engineering to name a few.

Today all across Wisconsin students in agriculture classes are learning things such as the chemical reactions in the process of making bread; why does the bread dough rise, where do the holes come from and what happens to carbohydrates and sugars during this process. In another school students are doing a research project on lettuce; doing research to find out of using water, fertilizer water or fish water, which does the lettuce go better in and more importantly asking the question WHY? In a different school district students are learning about genetics, being able to predict the genetic make up species of mice whether they will have hair or be hairless.

These are just a few of the things that are going on in our schools today and this is why AB 236 is important.

Currently there is no standard set for school districts in applying credits earned in an agriculture class that has been certified as a science equivalent towards graduation. This bill seeks to do that by very simply stating that if a student takes a class that DPI has certified as a science equivalent, then the student must be given a science credit towards their graduation requirement of 2 science credits.

We have worked with both DPI and the Wisconsin Association of School Boards to address all of their concerns, and we did that through our sub amendment to our original bill.

On a personal note...

I thank you for allowing me to be here today to testify on behalf of my boss and I am now prepared to answer any questions you may have.

Thanks.



## Testimony of Wisconsin Farmers Union regarding AB-236



Presented by Mike Stranz, WFU Government Relations Specialist

### Senate Committee on Education

Thursday, December 3, 2009

Chairman Lehman and members of the Senate Committee on Education, thank you for holding this hearing on Assembly Bill 236. I'm Mike Stranz, Government Relations Specialist for Wisconsin Farmers Union, and I work out of our Madison office. Wisconsin Farmers Union urges you to support this bill.

Wisconsin Farmers Union is a statewide organization made up of farm families, rural residents and consumers who have an interest in agriculture. The organization was founded in 1930 on three core principles, as seen on the triangle at the upper right-hand corner of the written testimony before you: cooperation, legislation, and, at the base, education. Our members know that it is essential for people involved in agriculture – and if you eat, you are involved in agriculture – to understand where their food comes from, how it is produced, and the impact of their food choices.

Wisconsin Farmers Union policy, which is written and approved by our grassroots membership, calls for the Department of Public Instruction, along with other stakeholders, should collaborate to allow approved agriculture education courses to be used as part of the science requirement for high school graduation. We are very pleased to see this bill continue to move through the state legislature and urge you to consider the positives it offers for Wisconsin high schools and students. Schools will have the ability to maintain and expand agriculture education programs because of the science requirements they fulfill, and more students will be able to learn science in an applied setting – agriculture classes – where tomorrow's workforce can learn by doing.

Agriculture is poised to be a part of a solution to some of the biggest challenges we face today. The threats of global hunger, Wisconsin's dependence on imported energy and even climate change will be addressed by agriculture in the coming years. During 2007, agriculture generated more than \$59 billion of economic activity in Wisconsin and provided jobs for nearly 360,000 people. The state ought to do all that it can to encourage high schools to offer agriculture education courses because of the importance of agriculture in our heritage and for our future.

Members of the Senate Committee on Education, thank you again for your attention to this matter. Agriculture and education are among the greatest strengths of our state – now it's time to help them work together by approving Assembly Bill 236.